

Amendments To The Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in this application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of configuring a load balancer for dispatching client requests amongst a plurality of servers, said method comprising:

~~storing a configuration file in a local memory of each one of said plurality of servers each of said configuration files containing parameters including variables to be applied for configuring a load balancing scheme for said plurality of servers; and~~

obtaining ~~said configuration files~~ a configuration file from each of said plurality of servers, wherein each configuration file is stored in a local memory of its associated one of said plurality of servers at a predefined Uniform Resource Locator (URL) and contains parameters including variables to be applied for configuring a load balancing scheme for said plurality of servers, wherein said configuration files ~~[[are]]~~ obtained by repeating for each of said plurality of servers:

selecting by said load balancer, a next one of said plurality of servers;

sending a request across a corresponding network from said load balancer to said next one of said plurality of servers for a corresponding configuration file using a standard network protocol request to the corresponding URL;

receiving either a corresponding configuration file formatted into a markup language supported by the load balancer or an error message from said next one of said plurality of servers; and

validating parameters in said corresponding configuration file if received;

and

configuring a load balancing algorithm by said load balancer in accordance with said parameters that were read out of each corresponding configuration file.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein each of said configuration files has a file path and name in accordance with a standard file path and naming protocol.
4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein said parameters provided in at least one of said configuration files comprises content-based routing rules.
5. (Original) The method of claim 4 wherein said content-based routing rules comprise a URL mask.
6. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein said parameters of at least one configuration file comprise at least one of time-of-day rules, session affinity rules, cookie affinity rules, server health information and a link to said server health information.
7. (Canceled)
8. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein said plurality of servers comprise a server farm coupled to receive client requests via the Internet.
9. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein said configuration files are stored in one of an HTML or XML file format.
10. (Currently Amended) A computer readable product embodied on computer readable media readable by a computing device for configuring a scheme for balancing the servicing of client requests among a plurality of servers, said computer readable product comprising:
computer readable program code configured to obtain a configuration file from each of said plurality of servers, each of said configuration files, which is stored in a local memory of its corresponding one of said plurality of servers at a predefined Uniform Resource Locator (URL), [[and]] containing parameters including variables to be applied for configuring a load balancing

scheme for said plurality of servers, wherein said configuration files are obtained for each of said plurality of servers by:

computer readable program code configured to select by said load balancer, a next one of said plurality of servers;

computer readable program code configured to send a request across a corresponding network from said load balancer to said next one of said plurality of servers for a corresponding configuration file using a standard network protocol request to the corresponding URL;

computer readable program code configured to receive either a corresponding configuration file formatted into a markup language supported by the load balancer or an error message from said next one of said plurality of servers; and

computer readable program code configured to validate parameters in said corresponding configuration file if received; and

computer readable program code configured to configure a load balancing algorithm by said load balancer in accordance with said parameters that were read out of each corresponding configuration file.

11. (Original) The product of claim 10 wherein each of said configuration files has a file path and name in accordance with a standard file path and naming protocol.

12. (Currently Amended) A computing apparatus for performing load balancing of client requests among a plurality of servers, said apparatus comprising:

means for interfacing to a network to receive client requests directed to one of said plurality of servers via said network;

means for obtaining a configuration file from each of said plurality of servers, each of said configuration files, which is stored in a local memory of its corresponding one of said plurality of servers at a predefined Uniform Resource Locator (URL), [[and]] containing parameters including variables to be applied for configuring a load balancing scheme for said

plurality of servers, wherein said configuration files are obtained for each of said plurality of servers by:

means for selecting by said load balancer, a next one of said plurality of servers;

means for sending a request across a corresponding network from said load balancer to said next one of said plurality of servers for a corresponding configuration file using a standard network protocol request to the corresponding URL;

means for receiving either a corresponding configuration file formatted into a markup language supported by the load balancer or an error message from said next one of said plurality of servers; and

means for validating parameters in said corresponding configuration file if received;

means for configuring said load balancer to dispatch client requests among said plurality of servers based on a load balancing algorithm defined by said parameters including said variables obtained from said configuration files; and

means for dispatching requests received via said network to said plurality of servers in accordance with said algorithm.

13. (Canceled)

14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein configuring said load balancer comprises:

initializing the load balancer by manually inputting the address information of each one of said plurality of servers;

polling each one of said plurality of servers for said configuration file pertaining to each of said servers; validating each of said configuration files; and

configuring the load balancing algorithm based on said parameters in said configuration files.

15. (Canceled)

16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein said storing a configuration file in a local memory of each one of said plurality of servers, each of said configuration files containing parameters including variables to be applied for configuring a load balancing scheme for said plurality of servers comprises:

storing configuration files provided by a server manufacturer.

17. (Previously Presented) The product of claim 10 wherein said parameters provided in at least one of said configuration files comprises content-based routing rules.

18. (Previously Presented) The product of claim 10 wherein said parameters of at least one configuration file comprise at least one of time-of-day rules, session affinity rules, cookie affinity rules, server health information and a link to said server health information.

19. (Previously Presented) The product of claim 10 further comprising:

computer readable program code configured to initialize the load balancer by reading manually inputted address information of each one of said plurality of servers;

computer readable program code configured to poll each one of said plurality of servers for said configuration file pertaining to each of said servers; and

computer readable program code configured to validate each of said configuration files for configuring said load balancer to dispatch client requests among said plurality of servers.

20. (Previously Presented) The product of claim 10, wherein said computer readable program code configured to obtain a configuration file from each of said plurality of servers comprises:

computer readable program code configured to obtain configuration files provided by a server manufacturer.

21. (Previously Presented) The computing apparatus of claim 12 wherein said means for obtaining a configuration file from each of said plurality of servers comprises means for obtaining each said configuration file based upon a file path and name in accordance with a standard file path and naming protocol.

22. (Previously Presented) The computing apparatus of claim 12 wherein said parameters provided in at least one of said configuration files comprises content-based routing rules.

23. (Previously Presented) The computing apparatus of claim 12, wherein said means for configuring said load balancer to dispatch client requests among said plurality of servers based on a load balancing algorithm defined by said parameters including said variables obtained from said configuration files further comprises:

means to initialize the load balancer based upon manually inputted address information of each one of said plurality of servers;

means to poll each one of said plurality of servers for said configuration file pertaining to each of said servers; and

means to validate each of said configuration files for configuring said load balancer to dispatch client requests among said plurality of servers.

24. (Previously Presented) The computing apparatus of claim 12 wherein said configuration files are provided by a server manufacturer.